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REVIEWS AND CRITICISMS

The book gives a good survey of the field and encompasses an enormous amount of detail on all sorts of hygienic problems. It is, moreover, presented in a clear and simple manner. Such a book should find a considerable demand as a text-book, or as a reference book for the general reader, though its value would be increased, in this country, if it were translated.

Some of the topics covered are enumerated below: Organization of sanitary affairs in Germany and Austria, with rules and laws pertaining thereto; Air, weather and climate, the soil, clothing and bathing, water, milk and food supply; Sewage and garbage disposal; Construction, heating and ventilation, and lighting of dwellings and their relation to each other and to the street; School hygiene; Infectious diseases, their causes, disinfection, immunity, relation of other animals and of air, water and the like to human diseases; Hygiene of trades and occupations, including protection of employees, lighting and ventilation of factories, child labor, sick and accident insurance.

Northwestern University.

GEORGE T. HARGITT.

PROSTITUTION, ITS NATURE AND CURE. Penal Reform League, London, 1913. Pp. 16, 2d.

There is much to be commended in this measure and I believe it marks an advance in the method of handling prostitution. An essential error, however, is in the bill—and that error is the common one to practically all laws that have been enacted upon the subject—is that the emphasis is placed upon the economic rather than upon the anthropologic aspect of the matter. The subject of prostitution throughout the ages has been invested with a strange mystery. The scarlet woman has served as a background figure at least in the tumultuous struggle, the passionate conflict of man to man and nation to nation that has made up our human history.

Yes, and sad though it appear, her part has been a conspicuous one in that checkered history. It is the half conscious feeling of this fact, together with her obvious disregard of the plainest lessons of experience, her patent contempt for what the normal among her sex hold sacred—conventional morality—that has made her so inexplicable. Modern science, however, with its iconoclastic methods of precision that has dispelled so many of the world's illusions, has again adduced proof that this mysterious and alluring devotee of Kama is in far more than fifty per cent. of the cases an imbecile—a mentally defective creature who could do little better than she does and is not entirely responsible for her acts. The problem of the control of prostitution is but a part of the larger problem—that of the control of the feeble-minded. Prostitution, habitual criminality, pauperism and other of the degenerative neuroses are but different individual expressions of the same underlying morbid state—vitiated mentality. The causes which generate this widespread delinquency are the causes that make for degeneracy—the things that impair the germ plasm. Drunkenness, syphilis, the deprivations due to grinding poverty, onanism in early childhood and possibly in

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infancy, and bad environmental conditions ultimately eventuate in an anomalous nervous system that is doomed to disaster, and from it spring root stocks from which are descended the different manifestations of mental defectiveness.

When the feeble-minded strain is once founded it is ineradicable and tends to perpetuate its type just as normal stocks do; it breeds true, and prostitution and its congeners will exist just so long as the stock from which it is formed is reproduced. I do not hesitate to affirm my conviction that if the mentally sub-normal could be eliminated from the human race, commercialized prostitution would practically disappear. Not that immorality would be eliminated entirely thereby, for unfortunately our present biologic standard will not permit us to designate them as invariably degenerative. All prostitutes are not psychically inferior, just as all criminals are not, but they form the groundwork, the foundation and most of the superstructure, and without them the building could not exist.

The normal man is conventionally honest just as the normal woman is conventionally virtuous; honesty in a man and virtue in a woman are synonymous terms. Primitive man was a free booter—a marauder—and judging by our present-day standard, a criminal. Primitive woman was polyandrous and ministered sexually to him whose strength or cunning gave him possession of her body. Atavism is here in evidence, degenerative stocks tend to revert to the primitive or barbarian type.

One of the great difficulties or errors in our method of treating social problems is our inclination to treat individual symptoms rather than to search out the cause or causes with a view to as complete eradication as possible. An essential element of failure in the treatment of physical ailments by the medical profession in its earlier history was due to this same tendency, and not until a recognition of the positive necessity of sound laboratory methods and a willingness to base the treatment on such laboratory findings or research work was the medical profession ever able to reach a rational basis of combatting human ills. The present-day methods of treating social problems necessarily will have to pass through the same era of evolutionary changes before we can hope for definite results. The several expressions of mental subnormality have to do distinctly with the great problem of eugenics. So long as we fail to recognize the fundamental or basic principles of the biologic laws governing eugenics, and fail to base our treatment on the findings of laboratory research our results will continue to be unsatisfactory. The laboratory has given to us our knowledge of the fact that the germ plasm is the great essential in the transmission of natural characteristics, and our hope not only for the solution of these various social problems, but for a continued virility of the race must depend upon a better understanding of the essentials of genetics and our ability to educate the public mind to the need of a rational or intelligent cooperation along the lines of improvement of the race.

The remedy for this condition is simple and yet complex: simple in conception, complex in application. Two words express it—steriliza-

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tion and segregation. Sterilization of all those feeble-minded who by reason of offense have come under the law as public charges, and segregation of all those who can be reached and who are not yet public offenders. The difficulties in the way of accomplishment are indeed great since examinations by expert psychologists indicate that at least four per cent. of our population falls within this category. It is hoped also that the time is not far distant when society through its law-making bodies will recognize the necessity of founding its marriage laws on scientific principles rather than sentiment alone, and that every step possible shall be taken to discourage the propagation of those who can furnish only additional burdens to be borne by society, and to encourage the propagation by those whose offspring will mean units of intellectual and physical strength to the human race. Society's first and essential duty is to awaken to the necessity of taking such steps as are absolutely necessary to prevent the burdens that are sure to follow our present methods insofar as they apply to the generations yet unborn.

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DAVID C. PEYTON, M.D.

ENVIRONMENT AND EFFICIENCY. By *Mary Horner Thomson*. With a preface by J. Rendel Harris, LL.D. Birmingham Studies in Social Economics and Adjacent Fields. Longmans, Green and Co., London and New York. Pp. 100. 75c.

This volume is a study in the records of industrial schools and orphanages in England for the purpose of discovering the relative effect of environment in the building up of human efficiency. In fact, the author says in her introduction that her chief purpose in writing the thesis has been "to show by a collection of definite results the overwhelming part played by environment in the building up of human efficiency." This introductory statement does not appeal to the student as an indication of an unbiased scientific attitude of mind with respect to a problem which can be solved only by scientific method. This, however, should not prejudice the student who undertakes an examination of the data. The method of investigation involves an inquiry into the statistics of homes, schools, orphanages, etc., for children. Only those institutions that are available as homes, etc., for children of unfortunate parentage are taken into consideration. Furthermore, only those institutions which have data with respect to the history of their wards after they have left the institution for a considerable period of time, enter into the author's record. The author rightly estimates that the only proper criterion of the effect of an institution upon character is to be found in the history of the ward after discharge. The longer period covered by that history, the better. The first point, therefore, in the investigation was to find a suitable starting point. With but few exceptions this point was earlier than the year 1907. Having established the point, the names on the records were taken in consecutive order. They are not, therefore, picked records. The minimum period of post-institution history that is taken account of in this study is four years. Two hundred cases were found which had such a minimum record. The average